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SUBJECT: GOLKAR ANNOUNCEMENT MUDDIES PRESIDENTIAL PLAYING  
FIELD

REF: JAKARTA 665

Classified By: DepPol/C Stanley Harsha, reasons 1.4(b+d).

1. (C) SUMMARY. In a surprise pre-emptive move to salvage his political career, Vice President Jusuf Kalla on April 22 maneuvered the Golkar Central Board into announcing that Golkar will not run with President Yudhoyono's Partai Demokrat (PD). The Board authorized Kalla, who as Golkar General Chairman also leads the Board, to seek out alliances with other parties. Kalla made this move following an April 21 meeting with Yudhoyono at which he felt jilted for the Vice Presidential slot. However, the Golkar-PD split is far from final. Golkar will hold its National Leadership Meeting on April 23 where Golkar Party could overrule the Board decision and stay with PD. The possible constellation of coalitions is murkier than ever but should clear up in the next few days as the three major parties all hold their Leadership Meetings to choose Presidential/VP teams. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) The Golkar Central Board announced on April 22 that Golkar and PD could "not reach a consensus" to form a coalition for the 2009 Presidential elections. "The Golkar Central Board gives a mandate to General Chairman of Golkar (Jusuf Kalla) to open political communication with other political parties," Golkar Secretary General Soemarsono (one name only) announced. The political buzz had been that a PD-Golkar coalition was very likely. Jusuf Kalla was touted by political analysts as the most likely to team up with Yudhoyono. Earlier in the week, Golkar leaders were sending strong signals that the party's interests would be best served by staying with PD.

3. (C) According to a senior Golkar member of Parliament, Marsuki Darusman, the Golkar Central Board decision was forced by Jusuf Kalla. Darusman said this was "a hasty decision by Jusuf Kalla made under stress and in an emotional state." Kalla made this move after an April 21 meeting with Yudhoyono at which Kalla had hoped to garner Yudhoyono's nod as the VP candidate. Yudhoyono did not even raise the VP issue, instead talking only about future coalitions. Kalla took this as a signal that Yudhoyono would not choose him. One consideration for Yudhoyono might have been doubts about Kalla's loyalty, a key factor in whom he chooses for his new team. Kalla "told the Board that he believes the Party was being belittled by PD and Yudhoyono," Marsuki told DepPol/C.

4. (C) This uncertainty regarding Yudhoyono's intentions put Kalla in a difficult position. His support within Golkar fell after Golkar's poor showing in Legislative elections (projected at 14-15% of the vote, a drop of 7% from the 2004 elections). Kalla did top the list of possible VP candidates from Golkar, according to an internal Golkar poll which ranked candidates in the following order: Kalla, Yogyakarta

Governor Sultan Hemengkubuwono X, businessman Surya Paloh, and Speaker of Parliament Agung Laksono. If the April 23 Leadership Meeting rejects the split with PD, presumably Golkar would select among the other four names--excluding Kalla--as possible candidates to be presented to Yudhoyono.

15. (C) Marsuki told DepPol/C that Kalla's unilateral move to announce the split was "quite unprecedented." This decision can only be made at the April 23 Leadership Meeting, at which hundreds of Party leaders gather, including all Provincial and District leaders, he explained. The Board decision is non-binding. "I feel this (move) has been a blunder for the integrity of the Party," Marsuki said, "We assume that the rank and file will have a very different view from Kalla's." The trend within Golkar was to support the PD-Golkar partnership and there is no strong move to pair up with PDI-P, Marsuki said.

16. (C) Whether Golkar aligns itself with PD or with other parties, and how the coalitions line up, likely will be clearer by the end of the week. Following Golkar's national Leadership Meeting on April 23, PD and PDI-P will hold their meetings on April 25. All parties must announce their Presidential teams by May 16 for the July 9 election.  
HUME